



US Army Corps of Engineers
Norfolk District



City of Hampton

Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 12, 2003

Points of Contact:

Diana Bailey or Gerald Rogers, Public Affairs, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk, 441-7606

Ed Novi, City of Hampton, 728-3501

Dawn Fulsher-Thatcher, U.S. EPA Site Contact, 215-814-3270

Stacie Driscoll, U.S. EPA Virginia FUDS Manager, 215-814-3368

John Handzo, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), 804-698-4079

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues ordnance sweep at Buckroe Beach

What & When : U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordnance experts began the next step in its ordnance investigation at Buckroe today to identify and remove any ordnance that might still remain on the beach. Two field crews will be working 7 days a week, 10-hours per day to complete the investigation by May 23 in time for Memorial Day weekend.

Who: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working in cooperation with the City of Hampton, U.S. EPA, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to educate the public, schedule work, and mark off the portions of the beach being investigated.

How: During the first phase, the Corps the beach in grids, and establishing a 50- to 200-foot safety perimeter around each 100-foot by 100-foot investigation area where the crews are working. The teams are using a "mag and flag" type operation that involves hand held magnetometers. They will flag any anomalies for excavation and further analysis (also referred to as intrusive investigations). Excavation is being done by hand or by earth-moving machinery as needed. If any ordnance is found, it will be detonated the same day within a 200-foot safety perimeter. If required, most planned detonations will occur between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The only exception would be detonations required in the tidal zone that will be tied to the periods around low tide. Prior to any planned detonations, the U.S. Army Corps will notify the City of Hampton, local fire department and police department. Residents within 200 feet of an intrusive investigation will be required to evacuate for up to 2 hours between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. and will be given a 24-hour notice prior to any planned excavation within the 200-foot perimeter.

The second phase of the investigation will begin after Labor Day. It will involve a full-scale geophysical survey of the entire beach using the latest ordnance detection technology as a second review for quality control.

The city will continue to restrict digging and metal detecting on the beach until the Army Corps has finished both phases of the investigation, and completed its final study of the beach.

Where: Both phases of the investigation are designed to include all portions of the beach extending out to waist-high water at low tide. During the first phase, field crews have begun at Buckroe Avenue and are working south toward the Fishing Pier and then going from Buckroe Avenue north to Pilot Avenue.

Background: The investigation is in response to the military ordnance found last summer buried in 12 to 18 inches of sand in shallow water. The ordnance items resemble large bullets and are approximately 12 inches long and 3 inches in diameter. Officials suspect that the source of ordnance at Buckroe Beach was a 1990 beach replenishment effort that inadvertently dredged offshore sand that likely contained the ordnance. The ordnance items that were found were used during World War I and II for coastal defense and are no longer used by the military.

Why Significant: This effort is being done to ensure public safety at this popular beach. Following the investigation, the Corps will work with the interagency team to assess long-term safety measures to prevent ordnance at the beach in the future.